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# STATUS OF PREPARATION OF PUBLICATIONS, STUDIES AND DOCUMENTS FOR THE WORLD CONFERENCE

## Addendum

## Contribution from the International Fund for Agricultural Development

1. The attention of the Preparatory Committee is drawn to the attached contribution submitted by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) entitled "Relation between development and human rights". This paper has been prepared taking into account the second objective of the World Conference on Human Rights set out in paragraph 1 (b) of General Assembly resolution 45/155 of 18 December 1955 as follows:

> "To examine the relation between development and the enjoyment by everyone of economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights recognizing the importance of creating the conditions whereby everyone may enjoy these rights as set out in the International Covenants on Human Rights".

2. The paper focuses on the increasing number of poor people around the world who live in rural areas. The approximately 2.5 billion rural poor do not enjoy the most basic human rights, and the plight of women, who comprise 60 per cent of this group, is the most disadvantaged. Since the 1974 World Food Conference, the International Fund for Agricultural Development is the United Nations institution mandated to address the issue of absolute poverty in the rural areas of the developing world. It is involved in financing agricultural development projects which aim at providing economic and social opportunities for the poor in rural areas.

## RELATION BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS

1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims the economic, social and cultural rights to which everyone "as a member of society" is entitled. A corollary to that proclamation is the right to development for all: wealth, income, opportunity and social services should not be the prerogative of a few; inequalities between rural and urban sectors should be reduced since everyone has a human right to food, shelter, education and health care.

2. The stark reality is, however, that out of a population of some few billion in 114 developing countries, there are more than 2.5 billion poor people who live in rural areas, and of these approximately 1 billion live below the poverty line and are therefore denied such basic human rights. Despite efforts to reduce the percentage of the rural populations below nationally defined poverty lines, the absolute number of the rural poor has increased and there has been no significant progress in reducing the number of those living below the poverty line.

3. The poor folks' very right to live is threatened by disease, malnutrition and just the plain lack of the basics to sustain life. The rural poor comprise smallholder farmers (having 3 hectares or less of cropland) and the landless. In addition, there are artisanal fishermen, nomadic pastoralists and indigenous ethnic tribals. Smallholder farmers suffer from low yields, lack of productive services, inefficient markets for their produce which bind them in a low production:low savings trap. The most marginal of these small farmers, as a result of demographic pressures, have gradually been pushed into the ranks of the landless. The survival of the latter depends on uncertain and ill-paid seasonal labour and access to common pasture and forest lands. The meagre existence of the above-said groups is made even worse by natural disasters, policy biases, commercial premises and civil strife, which often forces them from their homelands. Other groups of rural poor are also affected by these processes. Artisanal fishermen and pastoralists are particularly vulnerable in terms of ecology damage and resource depletion and, as in the case of ethnic minorities, are exploited by a variety of intermediaries, traders, moneylenders and petty officials.

4. None the less, across all these groups of rural poor, the plight of women, who account for nearly 60 per cent, is by far the worst. Rural women are triply disadvantaged: as poor they are deprived human beings; as women they are subject to age-old discrimination and bias; and these two factors combined seem to detract and marginalize their role in society.

5. In comparison to men, rural women have less access to literacy, education, land and credit, their labour is cheaper and they must make do with less of everything, although they have the primary responsibility for homes and children and often must also manage the land due to male migration. Their lives are a drudgery of long work days, doing household chores, fetching water and wood. They must often look after food crops, vegetable crops and tend small livestock. As producers, though, they have less access to credit, extension and other productive services than the males. Rural women are the victims of gender discrimination at its worst, since often the nutrition available to them is hardly commensurate with the physical demands of manual work plus childbearing.

6. Apart from the violation of inalienable human rights, poverty also acts as a destructive agent on nature and the environment. After all environment and poverty are closely linked in a circular process of causation: left alone, each reinforces the other into a negative spiralling process of further degradation of environment and accentuation of poverty. Indeed, the rural poor are obliged in their plight for survival to make major onslaughts on natural resources: over-exploitation of soils, poor range management, destruction of forests, to name a few.

7. IFAD's role in facilitating the right of human beings to development originates in the 1974 World Food Conference. It was to be the institution of the United Nations system to address the issue of absolute poverty in the rural areas of the developing world, with the mandate of financing agricultural development projects which aim at providing economic and social opportunities for the poorest peasants, the landless, fishfolk, nomads, women and the other have-nots of the rural world. The Institution, in other words, aspires to endow these disadvantaged populations with the basic human rights to live free from hunger, malnutrition and want through sustainable farming methods, marketing, access to credit and off-farm employment.

8. IFAD believes that the deprivation suffered by millions due to hunger and poverty cannot be halted by the mere pursuit of the growth of the overall economy, which is believed to lead automatically to wealth "trickling down" to the have-nots. That this approach has not worked is demonstrated by the overwhelming persistence of poverty, not only in the rural world but also in the number of poor nations. A whole new understanding of the causes of the poverty process which infringes on the right to development is required, which IFAD believes may be formulated on a paradigm for development based on three fundamental propositions. The first is that sustained and sustainable rural development starts with, rather than ends with, poverty alleviation. The second is that poverty is essentially linked to problems of production and investments in poverty alleviation are therefore investments in production. The third is that it is the poor themselves that can increase production and it is they who represent a tremendous force for development. Without investment in human beings there can be no real development. Indeed, the poor can be mobilized in the search for domestic assets, since the resort to external resources has neither helped in alleviating the poverty of nations nor their people.

9. IFAD's projects are in fact directed to tapping the vast human resource that the rural poor represents. Strategies for targeting of specific groups of rural poor have been developed. They are the landless and the near-landless, artisanal fisherfolk, indigenous people, pastoralists, displaced persons, and across all groups, women. They suffer from many forms of discrimination, including socio-political marginalization. Apart from access to land and water, these people must be given technical support, technology, extension services, access to efficient markets and training.

10. A central feature in the new development paradigm is of course access of the disadvantaged to credit. The right to development hinges on equitable distribution of wealth, income and opportunity and it has been IFAD's

experience that the poorest are indeed bankable and that access to loans is a real catalyst in marshalling the productivity potential of the poor towards production.

11. The specificity of IFAD's approach to credit is not the provision of loans per se, but the way in which credit is tailored to suit the requirements of the beneficiaries. For instance, the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, covering some 21,000 villages, is a fine portrayal of how creditworthy the poor can be and how borrowers can also be successful savers.

12. The Organization places special emphasis on the vital role that poor women play in rural communities, which traditionally has been ignored. Women besides looking after the home and tending children, are workers in the fields and conscientious borrowers whose returns go directly back to improving the lot of their families. Although women's work is responsible for half of the food production in the developing world, their role has gone unrecognized. However, this is no reason to view women in isolation for they, as key contributors to the development process, must be brought into the mainstream of development, else there will subsist millions and millions of human beings who are deprived of the right to survival through access to productive sources.

13. Another IFAD approach to fostering the right to development and the reduction of the inequalities that reign in rural areas centres on peoples' participation as a means and an end in the very process of development; they are thus enabled to rely increasingly on themselves. While many external agents and central and local governments are involved in rural development, the full participation and partnership of the poor in the process is essential. They must organize to obtain their fundamental rights and realize their aspirations or rather their rights to a better life in their own specific social environment.

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